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# NATURE'S TESTIMONY

TO

## NATURE'S GOD.

FOUR SERMONS, PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF THE  
NATIVITY, PHILADELPHIA.

BY

W. M. NEWTON,  
" RECTOR.

[Published by Request.]



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TO THE CONGREGATION  
OF  
THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY,  
THESE SERMONS  
ARE  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED  
BY  
THEIR PASTOR.







**T**HESE Sermons arose from a felt want of the times. They were preached without manuscript, and were written out *after* their delivery. The exact order of thought and illustration — and, in most instances, the precise form of expression — is here preserved. The Sermons are, on the printed page, pretty much as they came from my lips.

Members of the Church and Congregation, to whose judgment I am accustomed to defer, thought, that as they did good to the congregation reached by the voice, they would be equally beneficial to the larger congregation reached by the Press. Therefore they are here

PHILADELPHIA, April 30.





I.

THE UNIFORMITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE.

II.

THE APPARENT EXCEPTIONS TO THAT UNIFORMITY.

III.

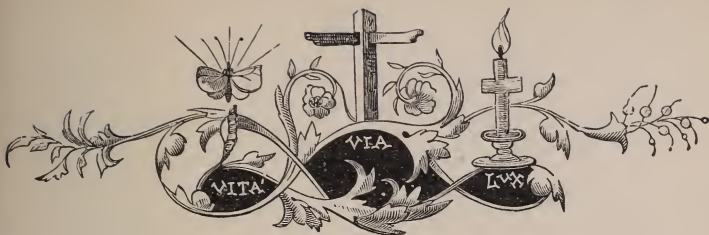
MAN AS A SUPERNATURAL BEING.

IV.

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# NATURE'S TESTIMONY

TO

## NATURE'S GOD.



### SERMON I.

UNIFORMITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE.

**T**HERE is, perhaps, no more striking declaration, than that of the Apostle James, "*There is One Law-giver!*" It opens before us a field of unlimited extent. It ranges through the world of *Matter*, and finds all its variety and beauty and grandeur the result of His action.

It enters the world of *Spirit*, and finds that, too, subject to His sway. The "One Law-giver" has to do with both. He sets

His impress on both. And in reading both, if we translate aright, we should expect to find traces of His presence. We may read the rocky pages of the earth's primeval strata, or the pages of His Written Word—it does not matter which. If "there is One Law-giver," *and we translate aright*, there should be substantial harmony between the records. It is in vain we seek to set the one against the other. They cannot be forced into opposition. The *facts* of the one and the *truths* of the other are alike, the thoughts of God, and therefore cannot disagree. Interpretations may differ; but the things sought to be interpreted do not. And when the interpreters come to understand the records with which they seek to deal, it will be *found* that they do not. Hand in hand, therefore, they ought to go together in the work before them, each seeking to aid and encourage the other. Jealousy, suspicion, and distrust should have no place between them. They are feelings of which both ought to be heartily ashamed. If

"All Truth is from the Sempiternal Source  
Of Light divine,"



shall the rays quarrel among themselves? Shall the yellow ray distrust the red? Shall both suspect the blue? True, they do not look alike. But combine them, and see how perfectly at one they are. How beautifully the white light of day comes forth from their union! How sweetly it seems to smile over the discomfiture of those who thought the rays discordant!

And when Jesus said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life," I suppose He covered the whole ground. "I am the *Truth!*" What truth? *All* truth. Truth of every name. Truth from every quarter. For truth streams forth from Him as sunbeams from the sun. It is the atmosphere of light about Him. It is the radiance of His presence. He *is* the Truth. Its glory is the coronet around His brow!

My theme, in the brief series of Sermons which I propose to deliver, is

*Nature's Testimony to Nature's God.*

And, desiring to deal with *fundamental* principles, as far as I may be able to grasp them, I call your attention to these words:

*"Forever, O Lord! Thy word is settled in the Heavens.*

*"Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth and it abideth. They continue this day, according to Thine ordinance: for all things serve Thee."*

Ps. cxix. 89-92.

Now, these words, starting from the *being* of God, declare,

*a.* That He has a purpose in the works of creation; *b.* That He has established laws for their government; *c.* That He has ever since maintained those laws; *d.* That all His works serve His purpose; or act as they do, because His will is on them.

In other words, they bring before us my special theme to-night; i. e.,

*The Uniformity of the Laws of Nature.*  
For they affirm that, about as strongly as words can affirm anything.

Now, as I understand it, there is no subject about which men of science take so high a stand, and in view of which they make such imperious demands, as this. None which they seek to turn, so confidently, as a destroying weapon, against the

teachings of the Word of God, as this. It is used, as a battering-ram, to break down the walls of defence around the doctrine of *Prayer*; of *Miracles*; and of a *Special Providence*. We are gravely told, that these are remnants of an effete superstition; dreams of the dark Past; idle fancies which must be given up before advancing light! And if we ask, *Why* we are to surrender them? we are assured that science has shown their fallacy. They are utterly inconsistent with *the Uniformity of the Laws of Nature!*

But now, what are the facts? Is this doctrine of Uniformity a discovery of modern times? Is it something just brought to light? Were our fathers ignorant of it? Is it something for which we are indebted to the science of the nineteenth century? Is it an advance on the teachings of the old Hebrew Prophets? Oh, as far from this as possible! It was asserted in the Word of God from the beginning!

It is, most positively, affirmed in the Text. No scientist could give it a more pronounced endorsement. And besides the Text, it

comes to us in varied forms. Thus, God says by His prophet: "I have appointed the ordinances of heaven and of the earth."

Now, "*the ordinances* of heaven and of the earth" are the laws which govern them; i. e., in the movements of the earth, and of its sister worlds. They are God's laws. Their wisdom is His. Their power is His. They are universal, because He is everywhere. They are unchanging, because His purpose is fixed. They *are*, by His power! They *act*, according to His will!

Then, too, it is written, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." But if "seed-time and harvest" shall not cease, why, the laws that govern the bringing about of seed-time and harvest must continue! If "cold and heat" are to go on recurring, as they have been from the first, must not the laws of cold and heat remain unchanged? If "summer and winter, and day and night," shall still return as now — and that, too, as long as "*the earth remaineth*" — are not the laws that govern in these phenomena

to be uniform in their operation? In other words, was not this doctrine of their uniformity taught in the Scriptures, in the most unqualified way, more than two thousand years ago?

So, again, it is written of the heavenly bodies, "They shall be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years." And what *have* they been for, but this? Is it not the universal experience? Are they not counted on everywhere, for this, with the most implicit reliance? When the mariner pushes his adventurous keel across the ocean, he has no more certain assurance of anything than that he will find them so! He turns his quadrant on the sun or stars; makes a brief calculation; and, laying aside his slate, says, "Yes, we are just at such or such a point, and, with our present rate of speed, will reach port by such a day!" They are *for signs* to him.

The astronomer, sitting in his study, talks of planets and stars, distant millions and millions of miles. He computes their distance, measures their size, assigns their orbit, determines their revolutions. He cal-

culates their rising and their setting. He fixes the course of every eclipse ; the points from which it will be visible ; the time of its deepest obscuration ; and the season at which it will occur again. They are for *signs and for seasons* to him ! But all this exactitude of knowledge and of operation is only Nature's testimony to her God. He has *said* that these things shall go on in unbroken uniformity. *And they do !* Therefore I say, that whatever there is in this doctrine of the Uniformity of the Laws of Nature, was a truth in the Word of God *before* it was written in the Book of Science ! All honor to those clear-visioned and noble men by whose researches it has been illustrated and enforced ! *Illustrated*, not discovered. *Enforced*, not first brought to light !

But I say to them, Let us understand one another ! This truth of the Uniformity of the Laws of Nature is not to be used to drive me from my position of faith in the Written Word of God, *because it was first taught me in that Word !* You must not expect me to relax the grasp of faith in



miracles, special providences, and prayer, as opposed to this uniformity ; because the same record that teaches me *that*, calls upon me to believe in *those* ! The "One Law-giver" tells me of both. He tells me, He is not only the Governor of the Universe, but the Father of his Children ! And in the interests of their relationship to Him, He administers His Universal Government. *Somewhere* — if you have not yet discovered where — is to be found the principle on which their entire harmony, their agreement one with the other, is to be displayed. For the record is one ; and the key to its interpretation will show how harmonious it is ! Search, but do not sneer. Examine, but do not denounce. Ponder well, but remember that God is above and beyond you still ! Leave room in your philosophy for Him to work in !

But now let us define, What is this Uniformity ? Briefly told, it is, That *the same causes, operating under the same circumstances, will produce the same results* ! Those results may occur daily, or once in a thousand years, and yet be equally illustrations

of this law. In the words of Prof. Tyndall, "The scientific mind can find no repose in the mere registration of sequence in Nature. The further question intrudes itself with resistless might, Whence comes the sequence? what is it that binds the consequent with its antecedent in Nature? The truly scientific intellect never can attain rest *until it reaches the forces* by which the observed succession is produced." (*Fragments of Science*, p. 64.)

Now that is the true position. You must reach *the forces* producing a given result, before the scientific mind can rest satisfied. Or, quoting again from that eminent scientist, "I view Nature, Existence, the Universe, like the key-board of the piano-forte. What came before the bass I don't know, and what comes after the treble I equally little know or care. The key-board, with its black and its white keys, it is mine to study!" (*A Tramp with Tyndall*. Scribner, Dec., 1872, p. 190.)

Now that is it exactly. And had this truth been observed; had the principle it involves been acted up to; much of what



has pained us all would never have taken place. The angry disputes as to the supposed conflicting claims of science and revealed religion would never been heard. If men would *play only on the key-board of facts* and the *forces* producing them, we should have nothing but the divine harmony of truth making sweet music around us, instead of the harsh and jarring notes that now annoy and pain us all. Nor can I restrain myself from saying that, had Prof. Tyndall been governed by the principle of his own illustration, much of what has caused his best friends the deepest pain would never have been written. He has *sought to* lengthen the key-board! And if, in doing so, he makes discord instead of harmony, should he be much surprised? Brethren! you know, we all know, that all the trouble comes from this. Let the scientist and the theologian severally put his own special interpretation, in the place of the facts and the forces of the record with which he has to do, and I would like to know where either would stop! For do we forget the proverb that, If we begin with an *if*, we may end where we choose!

And now, let us see how this truth of the Uniformity of the Laws of Nature affects the truths of Revelation. In what attitude does it place Science, in reference to the Written Word of God?

Science has to do with Matter and the Forces that act upon it. What *is* Matter? I do not know. No one knows! What is *Force*? I do not know. No one can tell me! There *is* Matter, and there are Forces that act upon it. Does any one know any more?

Revealed Religion has to do with *Spirit*; i. e., the moral nature of man, and the powers or forces that move and control it. What *is* Spirit? Who can tell? Men have been asking the question for thousands of years, and we are no nearer the answer now than at the first. We cannot follow it into the Holy Place where it abides. We cannot lift the veil that hides it from our view! And if we seek to rend it, the mysterious tenant is gone! *It is*, we know. But *what* it is, no one knows. Yet its laws are just as defined as those of Matter. Just as certain. Just as uniform. And the Grace of God,

acting as a force on this Spirit, is just exactly as definable as any other force! And Faith and Hope and Love are as well ascertained, and as uniform, as Caloric, and Electricity, and Magnetism!

Here is matter in the form of the Magnet! It will attract at one pole, and repel the same substances at the other. But, pass a stream of Galvanic Electricity through it, and at once its poles are reversed. It attracts where it repelled before, and it repels where it attracted before.

Is what Jesus calls *Conversion*, or the New Birth, more wonderful than this? Let the electric current of the Love of God in Jesus pervade the soul, and at once a corresponding change takes place! The spirit comes to have new loves, new repulsions, new desires — i. e., new objects awaken these experiences. In both cases, the result is certain, uniform, definite. *Always*, electricity, thus applied, produces certain results. *Always*, the Love of God in Jesus, when received into the soul, becomes thus the controlling power!

Here is the Photographer's plate. Now,

suppose, neglecting its cleansing, he puts it in the camera? Will his operation be a success? Will the light paint upon his plate a faithful picture of the object set before it? Of course, it will not. No; the picture will be blurred, deformed, obscure.

Here is the human soul, placed beneath the light of the truth, as it streams around us from the Gospel of a Crucified and Risen Saviour! But the dust of an absorbing selfishness lies upon its surface. Will the Truth perform its mission there? Will it make a faithful imprint on that soul? Of course, it will not! Truth, of whatever character, is as much under the dominion of its law as Light is; and the soul, like the Photographer's plate, must *be cleansed*, before a clear impression will lie upon it. The law is as certain and as uniform in the one case as in the other.\*

\* Prof. Tyndall thus employs this figure, in reference to scientific truth: "The mind is, as it were, a photographic plate, which is gradually cleansed by the effort to think rightly; and when so cleansed, *and not before*, receives impression from the light of truth."—*Fragments of Science*, p. 60.

We hear a great deal, in these days, of the Correlation of Forces, or, as Professor Tyndall terms it, the *Conservation of Energy*. And it is a subject singularly full of attractiveness and interest. It shows us that there is, everywhere, an essential simplicity in the operations of the material universe; and that, in those operations, no new force is ever created. A *change of form* is all that takes place. "Light runs into heat; heat into electricity; electricity into magnetism; magnetism into mechanical force; and mechanical force again into light and heat. The Proteus changes, but he is ever the same." (*Fragments, etc.*, p. 38.) In other words, the potential becomes dynamic. The power, the force, the energy, changes the form in which it comes before us, according to the circumstances under which it acts. No more. And all the variety and beauty and grandeur of the universe comes forth under the operation of this law. It is wonderful! Wonderful in its simplicity! Wonderful in the ceaseless play of its activities!

But is it true of *Matter* alone? Is it not

also true of *Mind* and of *Spirit*? I cite now only one sphere of its action, though the entire realm of our spiritual nature offers its illustrations. Here, for example, is the Power or Force of the Love of God in Jesus. It is potential; i. e., capable of taking on many forms of power, and is controlling in each. But *how* potential?

Bring it to bear on the human soul, and it becomes a *converting* energy. The man is changed by its power. Thence, it becomes a *guiding* and *impelling* energy. A new life is opened before him; and *it* becomes the active power of that life. It becomes the source of light in his darkness; of strength in his weakness; of wisdom in his doubts and difficulties; and of the upbuilding of true character, after the mind of Christ. With the Book of History before me, and in view of experiences now going on around us, I claim that this force or energy of the Love of God in Jesus is *as much* a force — and therefore as sure and as uniform in its operations, when its conditions are fulfilled — as the Proteus of which Professor Tyndall speaks. The



changes which it works, the varied forms which it takes on, and the active results it accomplishes, are as certain in the one case as in the other. That which it wrought out, in such splendid results, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, has been effected, just as really, in thousands of cases in the past; and in those which you and I and every one of us know, in the circle of our own observation and experience. Why, it is just the acknowledged history of the Gospel, wherever the Gospel has come! Men *count* on such results. It is a conceded thing, everywhere, that it has power to accomplish them. And when, in the case of a profession, they do not follow, we hear it said, *It was all a pretence. The man had not received the truth!*

Here is Electricity. Will all forms of iron receive it alike? No. "Soft iron is easily magnetized, but loses its magnetism when the magnetizing force is withdrawn. Steel is magnetized with difficulty, but it retains its magnetism even after the withdrawal of the magnetizing magnet." (*Light and Electricity*, p. 141.)

Is not this operation in the realm of Matter wonderfully paralleled in that of Mind or Soul? Here is the Truth of God in the Gospel of Jesus. Do we not all know that some natures seem to be immediately responsive to it—yield to it at once—seem to be at once taken captive by it? Is not every Pastor in the land able to cite cases of this kind? Cases that move the liveliest hopes; but about which, when you come to look for results, you are doomed to disappointment? You find nothing permanent. They bring no fruit to perfection. Their goodness is as the early cloud and morning dew, which passeth away—or, if you choose, like the magnetic state of soft iron, easily dissipated.

Again, are there not others that oppose it at every point? You seem to make small headway in impressing them with it. Like steel to electricity, they meet it with a determined resistance. But when they *are* impressed by it, the impression remains. It is an abiding change, and goes on working its legitimate results. You feel and know that the Truth has gone down to the springs



of character, and brought out thence the gushing streams of a new life!

I pray you observe, I am speaking now of *facts* altogether, not of causes; of *operations*, not of the mode in which they are brought about! And I say that, to whatever department of His works we turn, traces of the "*One Law-giver*" meet us there. Does not every law in the realm of Matter seem to indicate a corresponding law in that of Spirit? Is not law as uniform in the Truths of the Gospel as in the phenomena of Science? This *Uniformity of the Laws of God*, why, brethren, it underlies every hope the Gospel sets before us! Take it away, dig beneath its foundation, affect its certainty, and everything is lost.

I therefore rejoice in it as much as the scientist, who seeks to claim it peculiarly his own. I count upon it as absolutely as he. I rest upon it with at least as firm a faith. For my claim to it is older than his. I look up to the starry sky, and out upon the broad domains of the Universe, and I say, with a bounding pulse and a thrill of joy: "*Forever, O Lord! Thy Word is set-*

*tled in the Heavens; Thy faithfulness is unto all generations."*

"Yes ! every word of grace is strong  
As that which built the skies ;  
The Voice that rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the promises."

I claim for my God, One whose word is sure ; whose counsel is fixed ; who writes Himself, "Jesus Christ, *the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever !*" Who says of Himself, "I am the Lord, *I change not ;* therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed !" Who, pointing to the heavens above and to the earth beneath, to raise emotions of fixity in our minds, says, "*It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law to fail !*" Thank God for that word "*easier !*" I know what it means. I know how fixed and sure and unalterable the ordinances of heaven and earth are ! But it is easier for *them* to fail than for my Hope in Christ to be lost ! I look on them, and say, *How firm they are !* How unchanging ! But the hope which fastens on the Word of a Crucified and Risen Saviour is stronger than

they! And on *that* I rest. I am safe. I cannot quarrel with those who seek to build up the lower, because *only the material* side of this great truth. But in the fulness of my own joy, in its higher range, I pray that *they* might be brought to feel and know it too!





## SERMON II.\*

### THE APPARENT EXCEPTIONS TO THE UNIFORMITY OF NATURE'S LAWS.

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”—  
(*Prov.* xxv. 2.)

**T**O-NIGHT I advance a step on the position gained in my last Sermon, and ask your best attention, while I bring before you,

*The Apparent Exceptions to the Uniformity of Nature's Laws.* And I say “*apparent*,” rather than real, for reasons that will disclose themselves as I advance.

Were Nature a system of dead matter only, as in the stellar worlds, I suppose

\* For obvious reasons, I omit the Review of the last Sermon, which, in preaching, I always gave.

there might and would be one unbroken flow of cause and effect. The same cause would work on, under the same circumstances, producing continually the same results. There would be neither variable-ness nor shadow of turning. It might be so arranged as to forecast results, through an unending cycle of years, with infallible certainty. Such has been the idea of mathematicians and philosophers. Such was that of the late distinguished Charles Babbage, in his famous calculating machine. Of this he had for many years held the idea ; and its development in the machine itself was commenced, under his supervision, at the expense of the Government, in 1821. In twelve years he had spent \$85,000 on the work, and so far perfected it, that it was justly regarded as a noble triumph of mathematical and mechanical skill. It was so arranged that, in calculating astronomical and nautical tables, he could so adjust its parts, that it should at any future time, ever so remote, make one or two seeming exceptions to the law it had, up to that time, observed. And yet these excepted

cases would not *be* exceptions; but absolutely the natural consequence of the first adjustment of the machine. Thus, it could be so adjusted as to register *square* numbers only, for centuries, and then, at a given time, register *cube* numbers, in one instance or more, and then return again to its former course. And so, he suggests, it may be with the material universe. It *may be set*, so to speak, to record a given set of motions and results through thousands and thousands of years; to bring about seeming exceptions to the law that we have been accustomed to regard as special interpositions of Divine Providence; and that yet, after all, these may be only natural results, provided for from the first, in the adjustment of the machinery of the Universe!

Now, it will not be denied, I suppose, that, to a *mathematician*, this would convey a very grand and exalted conception of God. But then, you observe, it would be the grandeur of *dead matter* only. And what would such an empire be worth? *Suppose* it could be so adjusted? Can we form no worthier conception of God, than

that He is the Builder — we should not then need Him as *Sustainer* — of this vast Machine of the Universe; infinite in its parts, and perfect in their adjustment, but still *only a machine*? To rule over barren worlds may be greater, indeed; but is it nobler, than our children's play with the wires of a puppet?

There comes in here, however, a fatal objection. Did Mr. Babbage construct this machine *for itself*? Was it merely to display his skill? Did Government aid him for this? No, you reply. The idea would be absurd. This machine *meant* something. He had an end in view in its construction; an end worthy of the thought and labor and means expended on it. It was for *this* he thought; for this he labored and planned. The Government gave him material aid for this.

So, back of Creation, lies an end worthy of Creation: a purpose which the Creator had in view. *It means something*. It was to accomplish something. You may multiply worlds as you choose; you may bring them under the most exact and perfect



system of law ; you may marshal them in the most faultless manner, and make them capable of infinite complexity of revolution ; and if, just as so many worlds — only as so much *dead matter*, under law — you contemplate them, the mind refuses to see in their creation an act worthy of God !

Therefore, we are compelled to conclude that, back of all this lavish display of wisdom and power, there lies an end worthy of it all. It was not put forth for itself. I do not propose now to ask the question, *what that end is ?* I insist only, at present, that there *is* such an end ; that it underlies the entire system of things which we call *the works of Nature*, and that, therefore, creation is not to be interpreted as one system of law. It is a system *within* a system. It shows us laws operating within the sphere of other laws ; each acting and re-acting on the other, and thus producing results *impossible to be produced were there only one !*

Here, *e. g.*, is a physician. What is his sphere ? Repairing injuries wrought by the transgression of natural law. But *how* repairing them ? By the use of remedies



which Nature herself supplies. Now I say, if Mr. Babbage's idea were correct ; if the world were constructed on the idea of his calculating machine, and I break my limb, it must *remain* broken ; Nature supplies no power to heal ; I am left with the consequences of my act. Law rushes remorselessly on, crushing whatever comes in its way.

But is this the truth? No! Every one knows it is not. Within or alongside of this system of *penalty* for transgression, lies the other system of *repair*, as extensive, as certain, and as uniform as it. Is not the Science of Medicine founded on this fact? And do we not everywhere hear the words of its professors, " Oh, we do what we can, *and Nature does the rest!*"

And how, if this be an illustration of the truth in the higher realms of moral agencies? How if Nature itself is keyed to this truth of a restorative process, by one system of law acting within the realm of another? —how, if these laws of *matter* are only illustrations of those of *spirit*? And how, if, in *its* domain, *restoration from transgression* be the end in view?

We live, therefore, in a network of law. One system acts on another, and the labors of the student of Nature, to whatever department he may belong, point to the detection of those laws, and the verifying of the results they produce.

Now the Text looks to such a state of things as this.

*"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing."* How is it? In a twofold sense, doubtless, *i. e.* :

*a. As showing forth His wisdom in His works of creation.*

*b. As opening a field for the exercise of man's loftiest powers.*

Here are the stellar worlds. For thousands of years they were moving on, in the silent grandeur of their course! And men looked on in wonder, and asked, *What is the power that upholds them* — the law that directs them? And then came the revelation of this hidden thing; the unfolding of the Law of Gravitation. And of this, it is scarcely too much to say, with Pope, that :

"Superior beings, when of late they saw  
A mortal man unfold all Nature's Law,

Admired such wisdom in an earthly shape,  
And showed a Newton as we show an ape."

And how far-reaching that law is! It prescribes the form of the heavenly bodies. It moulds the dew-drop. It hurls down the mountain-torrent and the avalanche. It causes the fall of the snow-flake; and makes the movements of living beings on the earth, in the air, and through the water, a possible thing.

What guides the comet in its wild career?  
The Law that rules the trembling of a tear!

And thus, as we extend our search, we gain additional proof that the revelations of Science, however varied and wonderful they may be, are only man's lifting up of the veil that hides the secrets of created things — only bringing to the light that which God at first concealed! And at each step in the process, true Science bows her head, and says, "*Lo! these are a part of His ways!*"

But, *in* these revelations, we meet with what I have ventured to call apparent exceptions to the Uniformity of these Laws.

I say *apparent*, for they are only so. They are the subjects of law, every one, but, as yet, we know not the law of which they are subject. As we look back along the line of discovery, we find continually-recurring instances of what were supposed to be exceptions to law, or departures from it, taking their place under its banner, as truly as those whose legitimacy had never been doubted. Will it not be so with those other facts and phenomena that, thus far, have eluded our search?

But, as we advance in our knowledge of law, we meet with phenomena that seem to be not only *exceptions*, they might almost pass for *contradictions*, so directly do they seem to cross the track of our previous knowledge of law. For example: Water freezes at 32 degrees *above* zero; mercury at 40 degrees *below* it. But here is a metal crucible. It is heated to red heat. The chemist pours into it a given mixture, which instantly breaks out into brilliant flames. Quicksilver is then poured in; and in a few seconds, it may be taken from the crucible, through the flames, *a solid, frozen mass*.

Now here the temperature is lowered 72 degrees below the freezing point of water. And this reduction takes place, and the mercury is frozen, in the midst of the crucible heated to red heat, and itself wrapped in a sheet of flame ! I know it is done *by law*. But it seems a fabled tale. It looks like magic. It *is* a well-attested and undoubted experiment in Natural Philosophy. I think I can tell how it was that a certain "bush burned with fire," and yet "*was not consumed*," when I learn how mercury is frozen in the midst of a red-hot crucible and enveloped in flames. Does it not seem to be an *exception* to law—almost a *contradiction* of law ? Could any of the miracles of the Old or New Testament be regarded as having *more of the miraculous* about them than this, if it had been performed a century ago ? Would the life of the experimenter have been quite safe from popular frenzy ? *We* know that it is a purely legitimate result. But is not that because our mastery of law is such as to place many of the most secret operations of Nature fully in the light before us ? Yet how much, even

more marvelous than this, lies beyond us still !

Again: There is no law better established than that of the expansive power of heat. It tends to push the particles of bodies asunder. Heat expands all bodies. But, take water at  $32^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit, *i. e.*, just as it is melted, or as it begins to freeze, and measure its bulk. Then raise its temperature one degree, *i. e.*, to  $33^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit. It should increase in bulk, as every other liquid does. But *does* it? No. It absolutely *contracts*! Raise it to  $34^{\circ}$ . It still contracts. Raise it to  $35^{\circ}$ ,  $36^{\circ}$ ,  $37^{\circ}$ , and what is the result? It still contracts. Raise it still further, to  $38^{\circ}$ ,  $39^{\circ}$ , and what then? Up to  $39^{\circ}$ , contraction still goes on. Pass this point. Raise its temperature *above*  $39^{\circ}$ , and the phenomenon is reversed. Instantly it begins to expand, just as every other liquid does. Henceforth it obeys the same law.

Who can explain this? How comes it that water is thus the exception to the Universal Law? How comes it that, unlike all other liquids, heat contracts it, from  $32^{\circ}$



to 39° Fahrenheit, and that, after passing that point, it invariably asserts its power over it, as it does over all other liquids. How is this?

I do not know — no one knows. Science has no answer! There is no *known* force at work in the water, between the two points indicated. The fact alone comes and stares us in the face. The cause of it is one of the hidden things that thus far has eluded our search. God has “concealed” it from us. No doubt, the *contraction* of water under heat, up to a certain point, is as much the result of law, as its *expansion* after we pass that point. Only the law is unknown. We wait its coming disclosure.

Does there not seem to be, in such cases, just as I have said, a law within a law; affecting, modifying, controlling one another? Can *any one* system of law account for them? Do they not seem to await certain conditions, surroundings, brought about by agencies outside themselves; and then suddenly to spring into activity and assert their presence? And now suppose, as the proof demonstrates in some departments

of science —*suppose* that there are possibilities of action ; realms of power, yet undiscovered ; capacities awaiting their coming day ? Would it not tend to show that, after all, the miraculous is only the natural in a higher range of law than *we* have yet attained to ? Would it not suggest that men who have gained credit for clearness of vision, have denied the light because they could not see ?

And we see the same truth applying itself when we come to examine the functions of the living body ? Do we quite understand how it is, that the brain, which is the source and centre of sensation, is itself insensible ? Is all our science able to read this riddle, and bring to light this "concealed" thing ? Do we fare any better when we ask how it is, that of all the muscles of the body, the Heart is the only one that is absolutely tireless ? We see, very clearly indeed, that it *ought* to be so ; and how disastrous would be the result if it were not ! But who sees, who can tell, *how* it is ? Do we know anything about the force that makes it so ? Every other



muscle relaxes under exercise; and calls for rest to restore its tone and vigor. Why does not the heart? It is in ceaseless activity. From birth to death; through sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety years — and sometimes beyond that — it continues its labor, never intermitting it, and never knowing fatigue.

And see how great that labor is! The amount of blood in the body of the average adult man is about eighteen pounds. This the heart forces through the entire body about forty-five times every hour; or 1080 times every day. Therefore, this living force-pump, weighing in the average man about eight ounces, is equal to the task of driving through the body the weight of 19,440 pounds daily! How wonderful this is! And yet it never tires! How comes this? How is the heart thus an exception to the general law of muscular action? Is there not some force here, that we know not of, working out this beneficent result? Some force that God has concealed, as the special endowment of this organ; and which all our science has thus far failed to bring to light?

It would be easy to multiply examples ; but it is needless for the purpose I have in view. The path is open to the conclusions I wish to draw.

Let it be granted, as a truth not for a moment to be controverted, that the Laws of Nature are uniform in their operation? Still, I say,

*a.* We do not know either all the forms of matter or all the forces which act upon them. We should, therefore, be extremely modest in the conclusions we draw concerning them.

*b.* We do not know all the properties and laws of those forms of matter with which we are most familiar. And, therefore,

*c.* We do not know all the phenomena which may arise in connection with them.

Need I argue these propositions? Is not their bearing on the theme before us too clear and direct to be disputed? All along the pathway of scientific discovery we meet with facts which seem to be exceptions to the laws previously known. We believe, indeed, that they are not ; but are rather

results of other laws not known till then ; and, in some cases, of laws not known at all. And, as far as the labors of scientists have gone, we are able to verify this.\* No new law is introduced when Science enlarges her boundaries. *Discovery* is all. From the beginning, the laws and the forces

\* As an illustration of this (not given in my Sermon), I may cite the following : — Phosphorus was discovered, A. D. 1669. From that time up to 1844, nothing was more certain than the properties of this singular substance. It is semi-transparent, nearly colorless, flexible, easily cut with a knife, or pinched with the nail ; exhibits a soft, waxy lustre ; is inflammable at a very low temperature ; requires to be kept under water ; has poisonous properties, and emits an unpleasant odor. But in 1844, phosphorus was prepared, differing in all these particulars. It is called *red, amorphous* phosphorus ; is hard and brittle ; not so luminous, and by no means so inflammable ; has not the poisonous properties of the common phosphorus ; undergoes no change in the air ; and emits no odor ! Yet it *is* phosphorus, and our teachers call it *allotropic, i. e., phosphorus in another form*, differing in properties, and yet being, and confessed to be, the same ! Who will tell us how this is ? We know well enough how it is prepared ; but *how it comes to differ*, what are the forces that *make* it differ, I believe no one knows.

which we now know, had been in existence, awaiting discovery. From the beginning, the phenomena produced by them would have been the same as they are now; had the forces themselves been known. Science is not *creation* of new forces. It is only the discovery of those before unknown. It is just bringing to light that which God had concealed. And who can say how far this process may extend? Who is entitled to say, we are at the end of it? On the contrary, does not every new phenomenon, every new force or order of sequence, seem to suggest some other yet to follow? If we did not know the laws or forces producing these phenomena, it would not be easy to point out anything more clearly miraculous than many of the best established which a lecturer on the Natural Sciences will exhibit to his hearers. Who can say that the miracles of the Old and New Testament are, *in principle*, more than this? Who can say that the narrative involves more than the presence of One who perfectly knew the laws at work in the case; and had power to rouse them into activity at His will?

Who can say, that if these laws were known to us, the phenomena they produce would not be regarded as purely natural, as is the freezing of mercury in a red-hot crucible? I do not know that, save *in the matter of time*, the turning of water into wine was more than what is accomplished for us, through the vine, every year! I acknowledge both as an exercise of Divine power; but cannot see that one instance of it is greater than the other. *Difference of action* is all, so far as I can see it. Of course, the miracle seems to be an exception to the general working of the law involved in the case. But *how* an exception? Is it so in any other sense than that the laws under which it occurs are unknown to us? That the blind should receive sight at the touch of Jesus of Nazareth is, indeed, an exception to the ordinary course of the experience of the blind. But is it more so than the fact just referred to? Higher up in the scale of course it is. But how, in principle, is it different? *Somehow*, a force was acting on the mercury that does not commonly act on it before intense heat! *Somehow*, a force

was acting on the optic nerve of the blind that had not acted on it before! But the mercury was frozen, as other liquids are frozen. The blind man saw, as other people see. In neither case was any law suspended; interfered with; disturbed.

So with causing the deaf to hear. So with restoring the lame, and cleansing the leper, and raising the dead. In every case, I understand, the result was secured in accordance with the laws of the case in hand. They saw as they had seen before, or as others saw. They heard as others heard; and walked as others walked; and felt the pulse of health as others felt it; and lived just as others lived. There was no new thing created. Somehow, they were brought again under the healthful dominion of law, that in their case had been interrupted in its flow. And it seems to me the glory of the work of Jesus, as a Healer, that He was able to do this. A *Healer*, not a Physician. For the physician works by means external to himself — but a Healer by His own indwelling power.

And now, gathering up these lines of



thought, we reach the following conclusions :

I. *Our knowledge is but fragmentary.* It is but little that we know ; and those who know the most are most assured of this. The World of Matter, with which Science has to do, is a great book, and we have, thus far, turned only a few of its pages.

II. *The spirit that seeks to set the Truths of Nature in opposition to those of Revelation is false !* For all truth is one. Every truth is in harmony with every other truth. There is discord only between the False and the True. *Is it not time we learned this, and rejoiced in the spread of truth, from whatever quarter it may come ?*

III. *Man is more than Science can measure !* He has desires and hopes and aspirations ; vast capacities of being ; which refuse to submit themselves to any physical tests. He is more than the formularies of the mathematician can express ; more than the experiments of the chemist can illustrate. When these have done what they can, *Man* is beyond them still. His spirit kindles with the thought, *I am more than all these !* I can take in the thought of God ! I can

thrill with an immortal Hope! I can glow with a deathless Love! I can triumph in an all-conquering Faith!

IV. *The Soul cries out for God; who, besides being the Governor of the Universe, is our Father in Heaven!* This is our chief distinction. There is no want so great as that which prompts us to seek God. No power so great as that by which God can reveal Himself to the soul; and entering in, fill it with Himself!

V. *Revelation, therefore, crowns His work, by showing Him to us, God manifested in Jesus!* Here is the hiding of His power; the fulness of His being; the brightness of His glory. In Him, God comes forth to human view, made in our nature, bearing our sicknesses, taking our infirmities. And while the bosom glows with the inspiration of the thought, "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names; He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds;" the spirit owns the power of that wondrous and gracious word, "*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!*"





## SERMON III.

### MAN AS A SUPERNATURAL BEING.

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet.”—*Ps.* viii. 6.

**H**IS is the re-statement, from the prophetic stand-point, of the grant of power, first made by God to Man. He was to have dominion over the works of God. He was invested with authority. He was to move on the earth as its Lord. He was to have power over the operations of the elements; over the other creatures on its surface: *over all things*, as being in perfect harmony with the mind and will of God.

The Text, you observe, is dealing only with God's *design* concerning Man. It does not touch the question, How far is this dominion now possessed by him? It simply

states a fact ; a fact in the mind of God ; a fact expressed in His creation of Man. He was to have dominion over His works. He was *made* for this.

St. Paul (Heb. ii. 6-10) takes up the line of argument, from this point, and declares that this design is not yet, in point of fact, accomplished. "We see not yet all things put under him." For the dominion first bestowed was lost. Man fell ; but Jesus, as Son of Man, has undertaken the work of restoration from the fall. In Him our lost inheritance shall be regained. As Son of Man He came, standing where Man at first stood. As such, He had dominion over the works of God. He could move on the Laws and processes of Nature, and win from them a testimony to a power outside of them ; a power that men had never seen exercised before. And so, I submit, His great works — appealed to always, by Him, as proof of His Messiahship — were premonitions, foreshadowings, of what will be the settled order of Nature when the disturbing element of Sin shall have been taken away.

To-night, I advance another step in the

line of the great subject before me, and ask you, in following out the thought of the Text, to consider

*Man as a Supernatural Being.*

You are surprised at this use of the term? But in the light of the Text, I think you will find no difficulty in adopting it.

I know that the common use of the word starts the idea of an agency in some way marvelous or ghostly; of some thing or some being *above* the Laws of Nature, and interfering with or controlling them, at pleasure. I do not so use it.

Webster defines it as "being beyond or exceeding the power of the laws of Nature; miraculous." But, then you observe, we must know what the Laws of Nature are, before we can say what is *beyond* those laws. We must know the *natural*, before we can tell what is *supernatural*.

The Text, therefore, suggests the sense in which I desire to use this word. Man was made to have dominion over the works of God. *How* have dominion? Not by arbitrary force. Not by disturbing otherwise harmonious operations. Does not the narrative show that he was *invested*

with dominion? Does it not show that, before he fell from his allegiance to God, he exercised this dominion, as *being in entire accord with the will of God*; expressed in the laws of the material Universe? He had insight into those laws; knowledge of them such as we have not now. His dominion, therefore, was not that of breaking or disturbing law. It was not in coming down on Nature with an outside force; but in moving in a higher sphere of law than the other creatures of God around him. Touching the springs of activities to which *they* could not reach, and thus attaining results impossible for them to accomplish.

Let it be granted that of this power a portion still remains. A little portion indeed! Perhaps, only the *capacity* of attaining it. You cannot think that man's supremacy now is what was meant by the dominion of which the Text speaks? You cannot think that the rule he has over Nature now is what was in the mind of St. Paul, when he spoke of the restoration Jesus was to bring in? That which he has to-day, he has gained as the result of ages and centuries

of toil. Generations have come and gone, and each one has added something to the foundation of power on which he stands. But the dominion of which the Text speaks was *given* him by God. The capacity for it was inwrought; a portion of the rich endowment with which he stood forth first among the creatures of God! No doubt it is in consequence of this, that he has been able to achieve what he has achieved. His triumphs, as science and the arts record them, are only the results of power first conferred, but as yet never fully enjoyed. Beyond all these, and nobler than all these, lies the grant of dominion first made to him, but from which, by sin, he has fallen. We wait the day of restoration. Jesus will yet bring it in.

And of this, the very word *Nature* gives us a real, though perhaps unconscious, reminder. What is Nature?

The word is the future, passive participle of the Latin verb, *Nascor*, *to be born*, or come into being. Literally, therefore, Nature means, *that which shall be born*, or come to be. It cannot, then, be an ordain-

ing power, sitting in the seat of authority. It is a result, foreshadowing what shall be, when all outside and restraining influences are done away. And, therefore, the Scriptures — which, after all, contain the germs of the true philosophy of every subject of which they speak — represent Creation as waiting for its birth, travailing to be delivered. Certain laws are impressed on it, which yet we do not see. The labors of the scientist bring to light, here one and there another, of those laws. But, after all, how little we know! The revealing day is yet to come. Nature waits her coming birth.

Now, it is in this sense, I speak of Man as a Supernatural Being; *i. e.*, as one originally endowed with dominion over the works of God. And it is a striking thing, how far, in our common speech, we speak of the works of Man as belonging to one class, and those of Nature to another. As the Duke of Argyl, in his very admirable work, "The Reign of Law," expresses it, "The mind and will of man belong to an order of existence very different from phy-



sical laws, and very different also from the fixed and narrow instincts of the lower animals. It is a distinction bearing witness to the universal consciousness that the mind of Man has within it something of a truly creative energy and force; that we are, in a sense, fellow-workers with God, and have been, in a measure, "made partakers of the Divine nature" (p. 9).

In one sense, indeed, the bird, in building its nest, acts on Nature; does that which Nature, alone, cannot do. For nothing but a *bird* can build a bird's nest. And so of the beaver and the bee. The hut of the one, and the cell of the other, could never be produced until the beaver and the bee produced them. Yet thousands of years pass, and we look in vain for any change or improvement in either. They stand in the line of cause and effect; with no power in themselves to go outside of the line; to extend its area, or modify it in any way. But the domain of Man is continually enlarging. He comes to the knowledge of the laws which God has impressed on His works, until his own

works seem to be a new creation. As developing the laws of Nature ; as making way for the exercise of the dominion first conferred upon him ; we may, in one sense, speak of them as supernatural ; *i. e.*, as belonging to the realm of Mind, and illustrating the power which Mind gains by obeying material laws. And it is in this sense I use the word supernatural, as applied to Man. He can act on Nature, while himself belonging to another sphere. And he acts on her, not by suspending her laws ; not by interfering with them in any way, but by bringing one law to modify another ; or in effecting combinations which, without him, could not have been effected.

The nightingale has wondrous powers of song, but it knows nothing of music ; nothing of the combination of parts that make up the perfect song. Man, too, has power of song. But he comprehends music. He discovers its laws, the relation which one part bears to another, and the results of their combination. Hence the fully-equipped choir ; or the Peace Jubilee, with its marvelous wealth of parts, whis-



pering, soaring, thrilling, ringing, clashing, thundering, through all the realms of sound. Doubtless, in one sense, all this was natural. Yet was it not something which Nature could not do? There was no breach of law, no suspension of law, no interference with law. There was nothing but obedience to law, all through. The triumph was by obedience. Yet the triumphing power was in the realm of Mind; outside of Nature, above it; having dominion over it; and bringing about combinations never known before.

Take another illustration. Here is wood. Here are metals, tusks of elephants, entrails of beasts. Of course they are simply natural products; and, as such, would continue as they are, subject only to the laws of disintegration. But Man comes. He thinks, experiments, constructs. And the harp, the organ, the piano, the violin, and the instruments of the brass band, come forth as the results. What are these? Simply, *natural* productions? So far as their materials go, *Yes!* So far as the laws go, in obedience to which they are made,

*Yes!* But so far as their construction goes, *No!* They are something more. They testify to the presence of a being outside the sphere to which they belong, and who has power over them; so long as he obeys their laws. Is not this dominion? A part of the power—and *capacity* of power, if you choose—first conferred on man?

Iron is simply a natural product. But is the Locomotive? Of what wealth of thought; of what tireless labor; of what patient and indomitable energy, is it the result! How like a miracle of power it seems, as it thunders on its way! Yet how passive it becomes at a single movement of the lever in the hands of the engineer!

Iron is a natural product. But is the Telegraph, flashing its news across the continent, and under the ocean, nothing more?

Of course, silex, in the form of sand, is a natural production. But in the form of the lens, in the Microscope and Telescope, is it not something more? Could Nature ever produce it? Do not these things—and all the inventions of Art and all the

discoveries of Science — testify to one who has dominion over the works of God around him? One who can move upon them from a plane above them; make of them combinations, and bring out of them powers, and put them to uses, unknown before? The materials out of which these things are constructed, are in the domains of Nature, part of the rich endowment God has bestowed upon her. Yet, *simply as natural productions*, they must remain forever what they were at first. Their varied powers must lie unknown, buried up, as it were, in the body possessing them; awaiting the coming of one who can call them forth. And Man comes. With his power of mind and will, he lays the hands of control upon them; rouses their slumbering capacities; gives them new forms, puts them to new uses; and makes them servants of his pleasure in his great work as “Minister and Interpreter of Nature”!

Now, take away our knowledge of the laws and forces by which these results are produced — letting the results themselves remain — and we would be surrounded by

*miracles* of the most astounding character. Is not this, so far, proof of the truth declared in the Text? Is it not, so far, dominion? What is dominion? Is it not power of control? And is not the being who has it, *more* than that which he controls? What is Science but a many-sided, though, as yet, imperfect, illustration of Man's dominion? And the Arts and the achievements of Civilization — what are all these but so many utterances of the same truth? I conclude, therefore, that, in this sense, it is competent to speak of Man as a Supernatural Being. He is more than the other works of God. He has powers beyond and above theirs. He can introduce new elements into the line of causation; and send forth results which, if not miraculous, are not so only because we know the secret of the laws producing them.

And how far may we go in this direction? — Doubtless, Man was made next to God, in dignity and power; endowed with dominion over all His works; exalted to the chief seat of authority. But Sin soon came;

and he fell from that authority, because he was no longer in harmony with the Mind and Will of God. Shall he remain so? No! Because the Redeemer from sin was promised; and at the appointed time He came — Jesus, the Second Man — endowed *in His humanity* with all the powers that belonged to the First.

And, just at this point, I recall an admission made by Professor Tyndall, which, I confess, surprised me much. It occurs in his article on Miracles and Special Providences — a review of Mr. Mozley's Bampton Lectures, 1865. In it he says: "For, what is his (Mr. M.'s) logical ground for concluding that the miracles of the New Testament illustrate Divine power? May they not be the result of expanded human power? A miracle he defines as something impossible to man. But how does he know that the miracles of the New Testament are impossible to man? Seek as he may, he has absolutely no reason to adduce, save this — that man has never, hitherto, accomplished such things. But does the fact that man *has* never raised the dead,

prove that he never *can* raise the dead? Assuredly not, must be Mr. Mozley's reply. . . . Then, a period *may* come when man will be able to raise the dead. If this be conceded — and I do not see how Mr. Mozley can avoid the conclusion — it destroys the *necessity* of inferring Christ's divinity from His miracles. He, it may be contended, antedated the humanity of the future, as a mighty tidal-wave leaves, high upon the beach, a mark which, bye-and-bye, becomes the general level of the ocean." (*Fragments, etc.*, p. 55.)

I say, Brethren, I could not help an expression of surprise when I read this. Not because I entertained doubts as to the correctness of the general line of thought here pursued. For I do not. On the contrary, I have long contended for something very much of the same kind. But my surprise arose from the fact that, in making this admission, Professor Tyndall did not observe that he was virtually giving up the entire question which, as a Scientist, he had sought to raise on the Bible doctrine of Miracles and Special Providences! For,



if in the humanity of Jesus was lodged the power of acting on Nature from without — as, for example, in giving sight to the blind, and in raising the dead — then, I submit, the *entire question must be given up by him!* It seems to me that the distinguished Scientist has unwittingly cut off the branch on which he was standing. You may speak of that humanity as “a mighty tidal-wave,” or however else you may choose to speak of it. It does not matter. It cannot turn aside the logical consequence of that admission. The broad fact remains — here, in the humanity of Jesus, was a power of control above the ordinary processes of Nature! And I cannot help asserting that, in making this admission, the entire question is given up. Will the laws of Nature be less immutable to “the humanity of the future” than they are now? And if, *in that humanity*, as antedated by Him, this power of control is to be lodged, is not the stronghold of scientific objection virtually abandoned? For, by the supposition of the eminent Lecturer, Man, in the future, is to be what Man in Jesus was!

And the question is not now — indeed it never has been — *Who wrought* these miracles? It is simply, *Is there power* to work them at all?

And here let me pause for a moment, to say, that in conceding that the miracles of Christ do not *necessarily* prove His divinity, I am making no unwise admission. I think it most unfortunate that that position was ever taken; and the sooner it is abandoned, the better. The Divinity of Christ is a grand, living, life-giving and central truth. It has its own most abundant and irrefutable proof; and must not be allowed even to *appear* to rest on a foundation too narrow to meet its dimensions, and too weak to sustain it.

And now, returning from this digression, I understand that the power to which I have just referred, is part of the grant of dominion first given to man. And is it not in the line of this thought, that the Master says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do"? (*John* xiv. 12.)



*Faith* in the Son of God, therefore, is one of the “powers of the world to come;” one of the principles of the government of the earth in its regeneration. But, clearly, it is a power outside of and above what we call Nature now; a power to which, indeed, Nature will be subject; and which can, therefore, work its results through the very laws which are now supposed to be independent of it, if not in opposition to it! And when it takes the position, when it gains the place God *meant* it for; Man — *redeemed* Man — will move through the material Universe, exercising dominion of which we see, here and now, only faint intimations! Not for the *sake* of dominion, but for the attainment of the glorious ends which God had in view at the first! God’s purpose in creation will be attained by Man, restored to his place through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ!

Now, it happens, that fourteen years ago, in discussing this question of the dominion lost in the First Man and to be restored in the Second, I wrote as follows: “There is to be a day when man will be re-

invested, through the work of the Second Adam, with all the powers originally conferred by his Creator. The dominion lost in Adam will be restored in Jesus. The nature, crowned as monarch in *creation*, shall receive a brighter crown in *redemption*. Man, redeemed man, will rise to a glorious headship over all the works of God. He shall walk forth as king over a redeemed and regenerated earth. The visible creation shall be in peace and perfection around him. The invisible creation—the special domain of the higher philosophy—shall lay bare its secrets before him; and the slow attainments which centuries of accumulated labor now enable him to make, shall yield themselves up to his will. I read the pledge and the proof of this in the sinless humanity of Jesus! In Him we are to read the *proof of all that Man was designed to be.*" (*Lect. on Daniel*, p. 175.)

Now, I know that all this is no proof; but it comes up so fully to the measure of the theme in hand, that I could not resist the temptation to quote the passage. Be-

sides, it shows conclusively, I think, that whatever of truth there is in the idea before us, is a *Bible* truth, and must be accredited to its legitimate source.

I stand up, then, on the basis of the Text. I claim that Man was invested with dominion over the works of God; that he lost it; that, in Jesus, Man's Restorer from sin, he shall regain his forfeited inheritance. That Science wins, by slow degrees and ceaseless toil, some bright intimations of all this, but that the restoration, the full and complete bringing back to the first type, is found in Jesus alone! Therefore, I conclude,

I. *That the God of Nature is the God of the Bible.* He who works the works of the one, speaks the words, and reveals the truths, and kindles the hopes of the other. There is no discord, no opposition between the two. Nothing but harmony all through!

II. *That Man, as a Supernatural Being,* endowed with power over the works of God, reminds us of what he was at first, and what he will be again. The proof of it all is in the humanity of Jesus, the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven!

III. *That in Jesus Christ our lost Manhood will be restored.* Not in the achievements of Science; not as the triumphs of advanced Civilization; but in *Jesus Christ* alone shall we regain it. Man, through Him, will be again what he was at first; with the added glory, that Sin can disturb him no more. The reins of government will be in his hand; the crown of royalty on his brow; and, in perfect harmony with all the will of God, he will be again "the image and likeness" of God moving on the earth. Who, then, can restrain the joyous exclamation of the Psalmist, "His Name shall endure forever; His Name shall be continued as long as the Sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed. . . . And blessed be His glorious Name forever and ever; *and let the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen, and Amen!*"





## SERMON IV.

### PRAYER IN ITS RELATION TO NATURAL LAW.

“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”—*John* xv. 7.

**T**HERE is here, you observe, a remarkable qualification to this promise; a striking condition on which it hinges. The promise is, *Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* The condition is, *If ye abide in Me.* In other words, If ye are in harmony with the Mind and Will of God, ye cannot ask without obtaining.

And this opens the way to my Subject, to-night, *i. e., Prayer in its relation to Natural Law.*

The subject is so vast in itself; it soars so high, and reaches out so wide, that I

cannot but feel we are standing on holy ground in seeking to handle it. And the special aspect in which it comes before us to-night, requires so much power of thought to perceive it, and of illustration to make it plain, that I almost fear to enter upon it. And,

I. *What is Prayer?* Popularly, Montgomery's well-known hymn affords a beautiful and satisfactory answer :

“ Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed ;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

“ Prayer is the burden of a sigh ;  
The falling of a tear ;  
The upward glancing of an eye,  
When none but God is near.

“ Prayer is the simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try ;  
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach  
The majesty on high.”

And in none of his compositions has the author exhibited greater beauty of thought and expression, or moved with more royal power, than in this.



But I desire to go beyond this. For, admirable as this definition is, it touches only one side of the subject. And my theme demands that it be surveyed in all its dimensions, *i. e.*, in the *Bible view of it*. And this, you must confess, is something vastly broader and higher than the Hymn.

It is no form of speech. Words cannot compass it. No marshaling of phrases can attain to it. The grandest petitions of our Liturgy may utterly fail to compass it. They are only "*forms* of prayer," and can never *be* prayer until a living spirit has given them life by making them its own. They are but the tickings of the telegraph, as the fingers of the operator move the machine, when no communication is sent along the line.

"Prayer," said that accomplished scientist, and yet devout and childlike Christian, Hugh Miller, "is so mighty an instrument that no one ever thoroughly mastered all its keys. They sweep along the infinite scale of man's wants and of God's goodness." And in Scripture it is always taken for granted. It is not so much *commanded*



as *assumed*. Hence, the Master says, "*When ye pray,*" etc.; "*When thou prayest, enter into thy closet.*" It is counted on, assumed, taken for granted, all through.

I understand that the desire for prayer is an instinct of our nature. I say the *desire* for it; the feeling which prompts to it. This is an instinct of our nature, and is, therefore, universal.

I beg you observe, I am not defining prayer. I am taking no account of the objects to which it may be addressed. I am not showing what it must be in order to be accepted. I am speaking only of the *desire* for prayer; the feeling that prompts to it. And *that* is universal. We find it everywhere. The Romanist, as he counts his beads; the Pagan, as he performs his incantations before his idols; the Fetish-worshiper, as he consults his charm; and the Buddhist, as he turns his praying-wheel; are all examples of it. They all feel the pressure of the same want, the prompting of the same instinctive desire. They are all responding to one common necessity; that, namely, of in some way entering into

connection with the spiritual and unseen. And one of the saddest proofs of the blight and desolation of sin, is that an exercise so heavenly in its origin ; so grand in its design, and so transforming in its influence, should be brought down to such dwarfed and distorted proportions as this !

The question, then, returns upon us, What *is* Prayer ? It is the noblest exercise of the spirit of Man, as he yields to the leadings of the Spirit of God. *Prayer ?* Oh, there is nothing nobler, nothing grander, nothing more elevating than this !

It takes in every distinctive power of the soul. "God is Spirit," says the Master, "and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The Understanding must move in it. The Affections must engage in it. The Will must respond to it. The Understanding — the Affections — the Will ! Why, these define our endowment as spiritual beings ! They tread the circle of our powers ! And, so far as either is wanting in the exercise, the *spirit* is not in worship. It is not prayer in the light of the New Testament teaching. For with

Jesus as our Teacher, we speedily learn that Prayer is the exercise of the spirit desiring to know and to do the will of God.

II. *And what are its Results?* Doubtless they are twofold:

*a. Subjective*; or confined within the petitioner.

*b. Objective*; or going out beyond him.

Now, of the first of these, my subject does not call me to speak. I cannot pass them by, however, without saying that they belong to the daily and best-ascertained experiences of the Christian life. You know — I trust we very thoroughly know — how sweet and dew-like are the influences which come down on the spirit in prayer. How like the gentle rain upon the tender herb, the grace of God distils upon the soul. How it strengthens us in our weakness. How it calms us in our troubles. How it brings us light in our darkness, wisdom in our difficulties, peace in our sorrows, and every needed blessing. And this is the action — according to Bible teaching — not of man's spirit on itself, but of *God's* spirit on Man's. Yet this, as the gist of the matter in hand,

is denied altogether. And whatever prayer can accomplish, is accomplished, we are told, *within the spirit of the petitioner*. And beyond this it cannot go. It lays no hold on God. It receives no influence from Him. It is an influence arising from and moving within the spirit of the petitioner.

And directly in line with this, a writer in the *Fortnightly Review* — no less, indeed, than Francis Galton — in an article on the Efficacy of Prayer, says, “Nothing I have said negatives the fact that the mind may be relieved by the utterance of prayer. . . . There is a yearning of the heart, a crying for help, it knows not where, certainly from no source that it sees. Of a similar kind is the bitter cry of the hare, when the greyhound is almost upon her. She abandons hope through her own efforts, and screams — but to whom? It is a voice convulsively sent out into space; whose utterance is a physical relief.” (*Fort. Rev.*, Aug., 1872, p. 135.)

Now, it is hard to say whether indignation at the atrocity of these sentiments; or pity for the man who could utter them,

should have the upper hand. For has it come to this? Have we been deceived all through? Are all the declarations of the Word of God to be repudiated? Are all the rich experiences of the past to be pronounced delusions? Are we only talking into the air when we pray? And was the Master Himself deceived? For He did think and teach that Prayer has a power outside of the petitioner; outside of the usual course of events. He did teach that through it man may gain a power of control over material things greater than we have yet seen! Was *He*, too, a victim of delusion? Is there *no One* in whom we can believe? Surely, it would be enough to be told that these teachings of our earlier years, hallowed with most sacred recollections, were only cunningly devised fables. But to be asked to believe, in addition to all this, that Jesus Himself was a teacher of these delusions. Can you wonder if surprise deepens into indignant rebuke?

But I do not care to argue this question from this point. I prefer to change the line of defence. How comes it, then, that

*Mr. Galton* — disciple, as he claims to be, of Nature — has committed himself to this view? I submit that his zeal has outrun his discretion. He seems to have forgotten two points exceedingly important for him to have remembered. They are,

*a. Every organ of the body, and every native power or instinct of the mind, proves the existence of its appropriate object or sphere of action.* I believe this is everywhere conceded. There is no exception to it. The reign of law demands it. There could be no order, no harmony, no correspondence of things, without it. Thus, the eye proves light. The ear proves sound; and *every* organ its own appropriate sphere of exercise. And so uniformly does this hold true, that, when *this* is wanting, the organ does not appear — as in the case of the fishes in the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, which, living in the dark, are without eyes.

So with every native power of mind, and every instinct of our nature. *Somewhere*, there is an object for it to rest on; a fitting sphere for its exercise. And we count on this as a certain thing, on the principle of



the order or harmony that obtains in all the works of God.

Now, the desire for prayer — the feeling that prompts to it — is an instinct of our nature. Is it less so than that which guides the infant to its mother's breast? In some form of manifestation, it exists everywhere. Reasoning, therefore, from the analogy of Nature alone, the conclusion is a sound one, that the presence of the universal desire *proves the existence of the Being who hears and answers prayer !*

The next point I make here is,

*b. That Falsehood never works out results of Truth.* Brethren, you know — does not the world know — that many of the grandest characters of history were moulded and guided and impelled by a power gained in prayer? They believed in a God who hears the cry of His children. To whom they might come with childlike confidence, under the pressure of every want. They believed that He was about their path; knowing them in every lot; caring for them in every want; loving them better than they could tell. Now, if this was a delusion; if God



does not hear ; if, when they prayed, it was an exercise of their spirit in and on itself ; why, then *they believed a falsehood!* And yet this falsehood worked out a truth and nobility and beauty of character that we cherish as the choicest treasures of history! Was ever idea more utterly unfounded? Can the stream rise higher than its source? Can one thing produce another *unlike* itself? Can Falsehood work out results of Truth?

In the light of these principles, then, we see our way clearly enough to the conclusion, that there is a Being outside of Man, and higher and stronger than Man, to whom we can go in every need ; on whom we can lay hold ; and whose wisdom and strength can be made available to us in ways we know not of.

Therefore, I argue,

I. *That the desire for prayer, as an instinct of our nature, proves the existence of One who hears and answers prayer.* And,

II. *That the results of this belief, in life and character, prove the belief itself to be founded in truth.* Do you see how sound

reason permits an escape from these conclusions?

I come now to consider,

*b. The Objective Results of Prayer;* or those going outside of the petitioner. And especially of those results in relation to Natural Law. What are they? And how far may we go in this direction?

Doubtless, the Bible contemplates such results. *It assumes them all through!* Doubtless, the Master counts on them in His teaching. Therefore, speaking to His disciples about their escape from Jerusalem, He says, "And pray ye that your flight *be not in the winter!*" Therefore, He taught that power to do certain great works "goeth not forth but *by prayer* and fasting." Therefore, we are taught that "*the heavens gave rain*, and the earth brought forth fruit," in answer to Elijah's prayer. Therefore, we are assured that "the prayer of faith *shall save the sick.*"

And there is nowhere even the slightest intimation that these things involved a departure from the established operations of Nature. Nowhere a hint that more of

power was required in their accomplishment. They are spoken of as quietly, as calmly, and as much matters of course, as the rising of the sun, or the formation of the dew. *They are in line with the power of prayer*, in the Bible conception of it. And if the prophets of old; if Jesus and His Apostles were mistaken about this; I pray you tell me what assurance we have that they were not mistaken all through? The foundation of our confidence would be gone, if they fail us in matters as important as these. We need, therefore, to enlarge our idea of prayer up to the Scripture conception of it.

Lord Kames — as quoted by Dr. Combe, in *The Constitution of Man*, p. 375 — says, “The Being that made the world, governs it by laws that are inflexible, because they are the best. And to imagine that He can be moved by prayers, oblations or sacrifices, to vary His plan of government, is an impious thought, degrading the Deity to a level with ourselves.” And, as far as I have read, this seems to be quite a favorite idea

of many who, on other subjects, are clear and correct thinkers.

“*Vary His plan of government!*” Why, who ever claimed this as the province of prayer? Who ever dreamed of such a thing? Was it ever heard that we should pray for July heat in December? If you decline to sow your seed, will prayer secure you a harvest all the same? If you pray against pestilence, and neglect your sanitary arrangements, will you *be* protected? Who ever soberly held such ideas as these? Is it not time our teachers of Science should come to comprehend that prayer operates *through* law, and not against it? Is it not time for them to understand the Bible doctrine that prayer is *provided for in the constitution of the world of Nature*; has a place among its primal laws, and works harmoniously with them?

We hear, indeed, a great deal said about the Sermon on the Mount, in connection with this theme. It is appealed to, as if its teaching rebuked those who cannot help believing there is space enough in the operations of Nature for prayer to receive

answer through the laws that God has appointed for their governance. Prof. Tyndall, indeed, makes a point here, and evidently regards it as a good one. He says :

“ Those, therefore, who believe that the miraculous is still active in Nature, may, with perfect consistency, join in our periodic prayers for fair weather and rain ; while those who hold that the age of miracles is past, will refuse to join in such petitions. And if these latter wish to fall back upon such a justification, they may fairly urge that the latest conclusions of science are in perfect accordance with the doctrine of the Master Himself, which manifestly was that the distribution of natural phenomena is not affected by moral or religious causes. ‘ He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ ”  
—(*Prayer and Nat. Law*, p. 39.)

But is Prof. Tyndall prepared to go as far as this Text goes? For, clearly, the Master *assumes the presence of a personal God* in the operations referred to. If “ He

*maketh* His sun to rise ;” “If He *sendeth* rain ;” why, clearly, He sits above these processes, and holds them to His will ! I am not for a moment forgetting that they are governed by law. The point I make is, that the Master speaks not of *the laws*, but of the *God who rules* through them — so that *God*, and not Law, shall be the power producing the processes referred to. It may, therefore, very well come to pass that “prayer for fair weather and for rain,” may be answered ; while yet “the miraculous” shall have no place in the operation at all. Let it be granted at once, “that the distribution of natural phenomena is not affected by moral or religious causes,” — I would not like to say, *may not be* affected — but, as the general rule, *is not*. These phenomena are part of the general scheme of His Providence ; royal benefactions to His oft-times thankless children. Still, I put it to you, Brethren, that with the Master’s teachings to guide us here ; remembering that a personal God sits above these processes ; it is not hard to see that they *may* assume the form of the



general blessing or of the exceptional rebuke? It works no denial, either of the laws concerned, or of the God whose will those laws express, to insist on this. And while Science and Scripture both acknowledge the occurrence of the fact, Scripture alone teaches that it may have exactly this explanation. Therefore, it is written, "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, *because they have sinned!*"

I know, of course, it is not for you or for me to assign this reason, in a given case. God alone is competent to pronounce on this. But, beyond all doubt, the Scriptures *do* recognize this as one cause underlying the occurrence of drought. The God who *sends* the rain, may withhold it. And, though in a different form, the withholding may prove as real a blessing as the sending, "*For all things serve Him!*"

You have a friend at sea! May you, intelligently, pray for his preservation? May you ask others to do so too? Why, if the processes of the material universe are subject to the action of natural laws, and if there is nothing beside those laws,



then, of course, the idea is simply absurd ! For, can you pray to a law ? Can *it* hear you ? Can a law change its course ? But if there is *more* than law ; if there is *God*, whose will is on the secret springs of the forces by which every atmospheric disturbance is brought about and ended ; then, indeed, the case becomes an exceedingly different one. And is not this just the point whence all the trouble comes ? Do not all these so-called scientific objections spring from the conclusion that Nature is nothing but a system of laws ? That, practically, God has nothing to do with it ? That its workings are the workings of law alone, and leave no place for a Personal Will ? For the moment we take the Master's position, all difficulty — and, let me say, all *chance* of difficulty — disappears. God rules — rules through law — but still *God* rules !\* Man deals with results ; God

\* NOTE. “It is curious how the language of the great Seers of the Old Testament corresponds with this idea. They uniformly ascribe all the operations of Nature—the greatest and the smallest—to the working of Divine Power. But they never revolt —

deals with the invisible forces that produce them. Here He sits supreme ! For what are all the elementary forces of Nature but modes of action of the Divine Will ? And, ruling here, what is simpler ; what is more philosophical ; than the conclusion that it is *His* hand that touches the spring of these invisible forces — into whose immediate presence we can never come — and sends down results in the phenomena with which Science has to do ?

And precisely on this ground do the Scriptures place this matter of prayer, in reference to its objective results. *Because* God is in the secret place of power ; the beginning of a given succession of acts, coming down to us in phenomena subject to law, may be just the action of the Divine

as so many do in these weaker days — from the idea of this Power working by wisdom and knowledge in the use of means ; nor, in this point of view, do they ever separate between the work of the First creation and the work that is going on daily in the existing world. Exactly the same language is applied to the rarest exertions of power, and to the gentlest and most constant of all natural operations."—*Reign of Law*, pp. 127-8.

Will *at* that beginning. Trace back the chain of results, link by link, in any natural operation, and you come to the ultimate cause or force. *Here God reigns!* Here He acts, in the production of results that flow to us, every one, through the laws that He has ordained for them! And beautifully in accordance with this view—bringing a Personal God and the Reign of Law together—is the Bible account of the storm, and the calm in which it ends:

“They who go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

“These see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep;

“For, *He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof;*

“They mount up to the heavens; they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble.

“They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.

“*Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble; and He bringeth them out of their distresses.*

“*He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.*”—*Ps. cvii.*, 23-30.

Is there any mistaking this? It is *God*

who does these things — does them, of course, through the laws of the storm — but still God does them. They all wait His will. All obey His command. And the relief from danger is just as much His act. "*He* bringeth them out of their distresses." "*He* maketh the storm a calm."

And *how* does relief come? "Then *they* cried unto the Lord, and He heard them." Is not this Prayer in its relation to Natural Law? But no marvel is made of it. No wonder is expressed. The stilling of the storm is no greater exercise of power than the raising of it. It is no more a miracle. God saves, not against law, but *through* law. Not by violating His own ordinances, but by summoning dormant forces into action, and working *by means* of His ordinances! And I cannot but feel, Brethren, that we have here the secret — I think the *whole* secret — of this much-debated question. The Bible puts God and His laws together. *He* rules, but rules through them; and that in such a way, that while the operation is theirs, the power is always *His*.

I am not ashamed, therefore, to pray for my friend at sea. Rather, my best reason approves it. All the difficulty disappears, when I remember the Master's doctrine, that God "*sendeth* the rain," that yet comes in perfect obedience to natural laws. He can answer my prayer in ways that I know not of. His power is on the clouds. The winds tell of it. And it so pervades the atmosphere, that the gentle breathing of a summer's eve, and the angry roar of the tempest, alike obey His will. All the forces of the storm are those that He appoints, and the calm comes at His command. And thus, in the teachings of Jesus, the highest philosophy joins hands with a childlike faith in Him who sends "lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are!"

And so when sickness is on me, or those who are dear to me feel its power. I am not left alone to the law of the case. For who can trace disease back to its real cause; or restoration from it, up to where the healing influence begins? *There* is the point at which prayer, according to the will

of God, finds its place of power. And gaining that, the answer of the Word is "*The prayer of faith shall save the sick!*"

And so with every special blessing. And the summing up of the whole is, That the power sought in Prayer is *provided for; has a place, in the constitution of Nature.*

I find an illustration of this, even in the domain of Mechanical Philosophy. I hold in my hand a book entitled *The Westing-House Air-Brake Company*. It contains a full account of the latest, simplest and most thoroughly philosophical mode of stopping a train of cars moving at full speed. As the name indicates, the brake is an *air-brake*. The force that applies it to the wheels is air. And the peculiar excellence of the invention — that which makes it so fit an illustration of my theme — is, that the power which stops the train, is *provided in the running of the train!* The engineer has it all under his control. The power of stopping the train is not a power on the outside. It does not interfere with the law of the engine. It is part of the working of the engine; and exists by virtue of the



construction of the engine. The builder had it in his mind from the first.

Is it not so with the subject before us? In building this great world, its "Builder and Maker" has provided for all contingencies that may arise; all necessities that may exist; and for whatever new combinations of events and forces may require at His hands. So He has stored away; concealed among the hidden things of His wisdom and power; a reserve of forces to be called into service—like the air which the working of the engine brings into its chamber—whenever it may seem best in His sight. Therefore, when Jesus wrought His great works, He was doing very much what the engineer is when he stops the train, *i. e., arresting or controlling the working of one law by the application of another.* So, in His prayer, before the greatest of His works, He was only preparing to move on the realm of Death with the controlling power of the Life that was in the Father and Himself. So, too, in the promise of the Text. When we come to know the meaning of, *If ye abide in Me,*



we shall find that harmony with the Mind and Will of God will let us into the secret place of power over His works. But all the powers that *He* exercised ; all that He promises to His people, in the Coming Age, are provided for, have a place in the organic laws of the material universe !

And now, Brethren, I have striven to lead you over a little section of this great field of thought. How broad it is ! How boundless in the riches it contains ! And as we walk about the Zion of the Word of God, as we tell the towers and mark the bulwarks thereof, does not every new investigation suggest the thought, *How strong its foundations are ?* And how directly every line of Truth leads us up to Jesus, whose Spirit is the inspiration of that Word ! All roads in the domain of His Universe lead up to Him. He is in the centre. He is "Alpha and Omega ; the Beginning and the Ending ; the First and the Last !" And blessed is he whose trust is stayed on Him ! Blessed is he who has made experience of His Faithfulness, His Truth, His Love !







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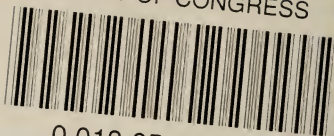
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